

Hong Kong Young Ambassador Scheme 2004
Appointment and Awards Ceremony
18 August 2004
Auditorium, Sha Tin Town Hall

Speech by Acting Commissioner for Tourism, Mr D. W. Pescod

Mrs. Chow, Dr. Wong, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to join you all at this Appointment and Awards Ceremony for the Hong Kong Young Ambassador Scheme 2004. I would like to congratulate you all, for completing the course. After the ceremony, you will become the latest Young Ambassadors to represent Hong Kong. Your task is a simple yet challenging one: to promote Hong Kong to people from all over the world.

Our tourism industry has recovered rapidly from the difficulties of last year. Up to June 2004, the number of visitors has already exceeded 10 million, representing a 68% increase when compared with the same period in 2003. In fact, tourism has been our major economic pillar for many years and the Government is fully committed to further develop and consolidate Hong Kong's role as the premier city tourist destination in Asia. The new tourist projects to be completed in the near future, such as the Hong Kong Disneyland and the Hong Kong Wetland Park, will certainly play an important part in this endeavor. But to me, the most crucial thing to our long-term success is the reception we give to our visitors.

Hong Kong is well-known for shopping and dining. But more than the great variety and superb quality of food and goods that we offer, the thing that most impresses our visitors is the attitude of the people they come across during their stay. This adds to the reputation of Hong Kong as one of the most preferred tourist destinations in Asia. Our hospitality and the professionalism of our front line staff are highly visible and appreciated by tourists and citizens of Hong Kong. These are valuable assets on which we can build on for future and sustainable development of the tourism industry.

The impression visitors receive is usually a very good one. Unfortunately, sometimes our visitors come across someone who gives them an extremely bad impression. You could argue that one or two people with a bad impression will have little impact set against the thousands that go away with a positive view of Hong Kong. This is to

ignore the fact that every visitor with a bad impression will influence many more people: their friends, family, co-workers and others. The damage to our reputation cannot be underestimated. It is for this reason that the Government has identified service quality, as one of the key drivers for return visits. And it is for the promotion of this spirit that this Young Ambassador Scheme exists. It is also the reason why you are here, to be part of the force to promote hospitality in the community.

In the past three years, we have appointed 485 Young Ambassadors who have all made their own unique contribution to the Scheme. Last year alone, 196 young ambassadors participated in stationing service in various tourist spots helping tourists and took part in promotional events. Out of their own initiatives, these Young Ambassadors also organized 157 promotional activities, local and overseas, and introduced Hong Kong to over 22 thousand participants of their activities. I would like to express my appreciation of their hard work and commitment.

One of the nicest things about this programme is how members continue to contribute long after their appointment as Young Ambassadors. I understand that 48 Young Ambassadors have applied to be reappointed as Young Ambassadors in the 2004 Scheme and the Hong Kong Young Ambassador Alumni Association of over 80 members will continue their contribution to the Scheme as well as Hong Kong tourism. Well done everyone.

You have been selected from over 600 applicants. After the three-week training programme, you should now be ready to make a meaningful contribution to Hong Kong's tourism development. I look to each one of you to play your part in spreading the hospitality and charm of Hong Kong to our visitors and people worldwide. And remember, this is just the start. The tourism industry offers a very attractive and rewarding career for those who are interested. I am sure your involvement in this programme will be valuable as you grow and consider what you want to do in future.

Finally, I want to thank the schools and organizations which have been supporting our programme. I look forward to your continued support in the years to come.

Thank you.

Tourism Commission
August 2004